1A—Academic Librarians as Community Agents #1

Librarians as Oral Historians: Intersections of Knowledge-based Community Activism and Digital Humanities

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This presentation analyzes the intersections of LIS and oral history in the context of digital humanities technologies. Using the BC Liberal government’s 2001 closing of the Technical University of British Columbia and subsequent TechBC Memory Project as a case study, Alessandro Portelli’s theories of oral history practice are applied to demonstrate the potential of this methodology/genre for Canadian academic librarians. Oral histories build relationships and local knowledge. They provide a voice to those who rarely appear in primary and secondary sources. They take librarians beyond the library and into the fray, where the historical record is continually being negotiated.